

To: Senator Luther Olsen and Representative Joel Kitchens, Co-Chairs, and Members of the
Blue Ribbon Commission on School Funding
Fr: Karen Sorenson, Spooner Area School District Board President
Re: Support for the Establishment of a \$1000 Per Pupil Minimum Aid as Part of the
General
Aid Formula

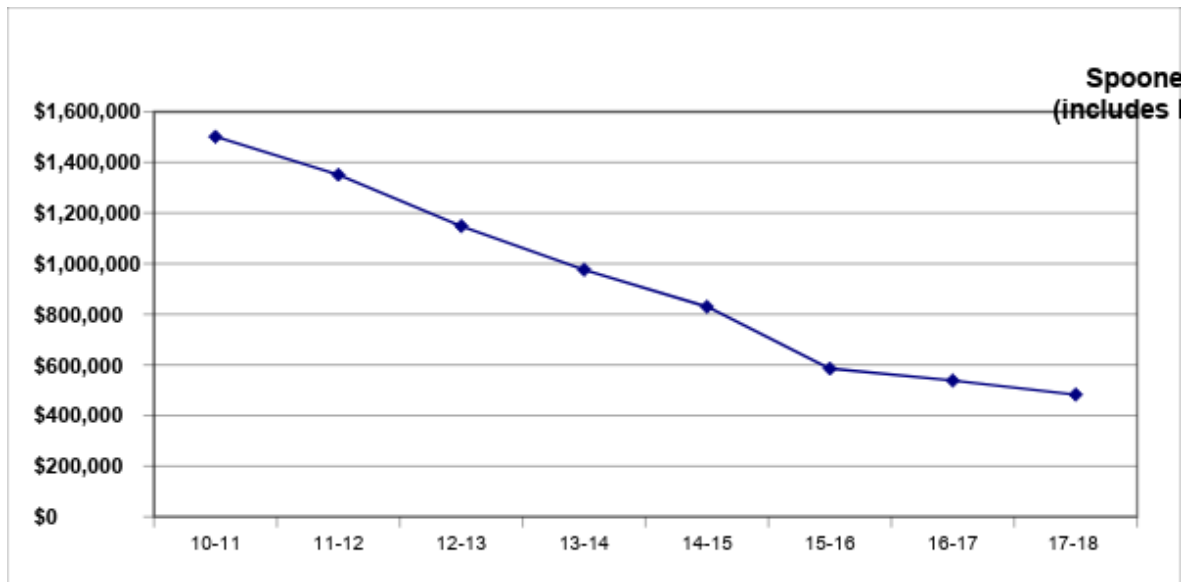
Thank you for the opportunity to submit written comments to you on behalf of the Spooner School District.

Our Board of Education **supports the establishment of a \$1,000 per pupil minimum aid “floor” in the state general aid calculation.**

As you know, our current school aid formula defines wealth solely on the basis of property value. Specifically, school districts with more than **\$1.93 million in property value per pupil do not qualify for state equalization aid.** There are 21 school districts statewide that received no portion of the \$4.2 billion in equalization aid in 2017-18. Spooner is one of 33 high property value school districts that only qualifies for “primary” equalization aid of up to \$1000 per pupil (see [DPI equalization aid](#) map).

The general aid received by Spooner is also comprised of **special adjustment aid**, which provides 85 percent of our prior year aid amount. The ongoing 15% reduction in our general aid has dramatically lessened state support for our students and taxpayers (see [DPI general aid](#) map). Consider that our general aid distribution in 2017-18 is **67.9% less** than the amount we received in 2010-11:

- In 2010-2011, Spooner received **\$1,481,962 in general aid or \$1132 per student.**
- In 2017-18, the students and taxpayers in Spooner received **\$475,981 in general aid or a mere \$370 per student.**



Source: DPI [https://dpi.wi.gov/sfs/statistical/longitudinal-data/equalization-](https://dpi.wi.gov/sfs/statistical/longitudinal-data/equalization-aid)

[aid](#)

Next year, we expect to experience **another 15% decrease to \$314 per pupil, and so on** until we join the six other districts that currently no longer even qualify for special adjustment aid. It is worth noting that those six districts – Geneva J4, Mercer, North Lakeland, Washington Island, Minocqua J1 and Norris – are mostly property rich, income poor districts in areas of the state where tourism is a main driver of the local economy. Families in tourism-based economies work six months per year for low wages and receive little in the way of benefits.

We respectfully ask that you fix the school aid formula to stop the continual 15% decline in general aid for districts like Spooner by **establishing a \$1,000 per pupil minimum aid “floor” in the general aid calculation.** Ensuring that Spooner and 53 other high property value school districts receive a minimum of \$1,000 per pupil would require an estimated \$25.7 million, which is just **0.6% of total net general aid payments \$4.884 billion in 2017-18**. These 54 districts currently receive a combined \$10.6 million or \$353 per pupil in general aid support.

By comparison, the **average per pupil general aid payment in 2017-18 is \$5,168**, while the **Wisconsin Choice** program provides **\$7,530 per pupil through grade 8 and \$8,176 for high school students**

On behalf of the students, teachers, and taxpayers in the Spooner School District, thank you for your consideration of our request.

Karen Sorenson

cc: Senator Janet Bewley
Representative Romaine Quinn